LADYBUG, LADYBUG: WHAT'S IN A NAME?

By Lewie C. Roache[1]

Plants or animals closely associated with our everday lives or otherwise brought to the public notice are often designated by a variety of common names. Because of economic value or other common interest certain plants and animals in sundry areas receive local names. Thus through the years and over a range of localities a familiar organism may come to be popularly styled in a number of ways. Coccinellid beetles are variously referred to as "ladybugs", "ladyclocks", "ladycows", and "ladyflies".

To say nothing of the incorrectness of these common names, confusion can easily arise because of the multiplicity of epithets referring to one and the same or to closely related organisms. The system of scientific nomenclature, of course, resolves the confusion over the precise identity of the animal or plant in question. Some attempts, however, have also been made to provide consistency of terminology in common designations. Early editions of Britton and Brown's illustrated flora of Northeastern United States and Canada included under the scientific name of a given plant, extensive lists of the various common names in use throughout the distribution range of that plant. Approaching the problem from another point of view, the Committee on Common Names of the American Association of Economic Entomologists puts out an approved list of common names of insects. Upon the recommendation of this committee the incorrectness of a common designation is likewise indicated by having the misleading substantive combined with its modifying name. Thus the terms "ladybug", "ladybird", "ladycow" written as single continuous words indicate that the coccinellid is neither bug, bird, nor cow. Unfortunately the names do not indicate that it *is* a *beetle.*

An uncommon interest in the many common names of this widely distributed and economically beneficial family Coccinellidae has prompted this note.

In 1606 we find a literary work of Sylvester Du Bartas alluding to these beetles as "ladycows". Drayton in 1630 writes thus of the ladycow:

> "The dainty shell upon her backe
> Of crimson strewed with spots of blacke."

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Coccinellids were well known to Leeuwenhoek who referred to them as "cow-ladies" or "lady-birds". The designation "ladybug" or "ladybird" is common today in the United States and in some parts of England.

Other less familiar names used in America and other countries indicate the popular association of this beetle with religious beliefs. *Coccinella septempunctata* was in Scandinavia dedicated to the Virgin Mary and is there to this day called *Nyckelpiga,* "Our Lady's Key-Maid" and in Sweden more particularly *Jung-fru Marias Gullhona,* "The Virgin Mary's Golden Hen".

A like reverence was paid to these beautiful insects in other countries. In Germany they have been called *Frauen or Marien Käfer,* "Lady-beetles of the Virgin Mary", and in France they are known by the names *Vaches de Dieu,* "Cows of the Lord", and *Bêtes de la Vierge,* "Animals of the Virgin". The names we know them by—lady-bird, lady-bug, lady-fly, lady-cow, lady-clock, lady-couch (a Scottish name), etc. have reference also to this same dedication or at least respect.

Perhaps from designation of the beetle as *Our Lady's* insect it was but a short step to use it in reference to ladies of rank as in the case of the Chemin Indians at San Juan Capistrano mission in California where the wives of the first and second chiefs were called by the Juaneño names, *Corrone* and *Tepi,* for the red and yellow ladybugs respectively. Perhaps, too, the vivid coloring and popularity of these beetles led them to be associated with royalty in Scotland where the peasants call them "King", "King Galowa" or "Colowa".

Other appellations and a variety of superstitions and popular beliefs are also evinced in rhymes and incantations solemnly or playfully chanted over this little creature. The association of the ladybird with fine weather probably derived from the faith of the Viennese who often prayed for good weather before the miracle working image of Our Lady at Marybrun. Hence we find the Austrian children throwing the insect into the air and crying:

Käferl, Käferl, Käferl;
Flieg nach Mariabrunn
Und bring uns a schöne Sonne.

Little beetle, beetle,
Fly to Marybrunn
And bring us a fine sun.

In England the children further believe that injuring the little beetle will certainly bring rain.

With the Northmen the insect is believed to predict the harvest. If its spots exceed seven, bread-corn will be dear; if they are fewer than seven, there will be an abundant harvest and low prices. In the following rhyme the insect is invoked to bring food:

Marspäert, fly to heaven
Bring me a sack full of biscuits,
For me one, for thee one,
For all the little angels one.

Perhaps the abundance of Coccinellids in June have led young people to associate it with romance. In the north of Europe it is thought lucky when a young girl in the country sees a lady-bird in the spring. She then lets it creep about her hand and says, "She measures me for wedding gloves." And when (induced by the heat of the girl's hand and the ardor of her love) the little beetle lifts its elytra and flies away the girl takes careful note of the direction of flight for from thence her sweetheart shall one day come.

In Norfolk, too, where this insect is called Bishop Barnabee, the young girls have the following rhyme, which they continue to recite to it placed upon the palm of the hand until it takes wing and flies away:

Bishop, Bishop Barnabee,
Tell me when my wedding be;
If it be tomorrow day,
Take your wings and fly away!
Fly to the east, fly to the west,
Fly to him that I love best.

Why the ladybird is called Bishop Barnabee or Burnabee there is great difference of opinion. Some take it to be from St. Barnabas, whose festival falls in the month of June, when this insect first appears; others think it a corruption of the "Bishop-that-burneth" in allusion to the fiery elytra of the beetle.

While using the insect to predict one's fortune in love is common throughout Scotland, England, and northern Europe, it is held in the Netherlands to forebode any form of good luck. In England it is believed to be extremely unlucky to destroy these insects. Persons killing them, it is thought, will infallibly, within the course of the year, break a bone or meet with some dreadful misfortune.

Apropos to the good fortune the insect was supposed to bring was its consideration as a remedy for human ills. It was formerly considered as an efficacious treatment for the colic and measles. Accounts are found where it has often been recommended as a cure for toothache, the remedy being to mash one or two of the beetles and put them in the hollow tooth to relieve the pain immediately. Jaegers reported that he tried this application in two instances with success. It would indeed be interesting if analysis of mashed ladybirds indicated the presence of a pain-killing substance in their bodies.

It is likewise curious to note that a favorite coccinellid chant (somewhat similar in England and America) does not have its basis in popular beliefs, but actually refers to sound biological fact.

Ladybird, ladybird, fly away home,
Your house is on fire, your children will burn!

The meaning of the above familiar though cryptic chant seems to be this. The larva or young of the ladybird feed principally upon the aphids or plant lice of the vines of the hop. Fire is the usual means employed to destroy the aphids on the vines and thus the ladybird's "children" are likewise endangered.

Whether or not the many common names of the coccinellids in general and sometimes specifically *Coccinella septempunctata* are based on fact or fancy; whether or not the appellations are misleading or are biologically apt, it still remains true that the numerous varied epithets given this bright little beetle are a testimony of its continued favor and popularity.

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DESCRIPTION OF A NEW SPECIES OF MILODERES CASEY WITH NOTES ON SOME BROAD-NOSED WEEVILS (CURCULIONIDAE).

By D. G. KISSINGER[1]

Miloderes nelsoni, NEW SPECIES

(figures 1-3)

Length: 5.00 to 7.50 mm.; Width: 3.25 to 4.50 mm.

Densely, uniformly clothed with metallic pale green scales. On sides of elytra and prothorax with long, projecting, silky, hairlike setae, each seta about two-thirds as long as length of prothorax, on disc of elytra setae much shorter except at declivity, suberect. Rostrum continuous with frons, in front view tapered from base to apex, apex distinctly narrower than frons, wider at base than long; vaguely impressed dorsally at level of insertion of antennae; epistoma not distinctly separated from rostrum, its apex truncate or broadly emarginate; pregular region at apex regularly emarginate, postmentum not visible as a peduncle in ventral view, prementum roughly rectangular, wider than long, with six setae; mandibles multisetose; scrobes well defined dorsally and ventrally, bent downward somewhat posteriorly but scape rests on bottom of eye because dorsal margin overhangs scrobe in front of eye and there is apparent as a projection. Antenna with scape reaching to about middle of eye, slender, straight, somewhat clavate at apex;

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